



**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON**

May 15, 2002

The Honorable Christopher H. Smith
Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to forward to you the report entitled Volume 1: Future Burial Needs, which is one of three separate volumes that will comprise the report, *An Independent Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries*, from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in response to section 613 of the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act, Pub. L. No. 106-117, 113 Stat. 1545, 1581 (1999).

Section 613 of the Act requires VA to contract for an independent study to address the one-time repair needs at each national cemetery maintained by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA); the feasibility of making standards of appearance of active and closed national cemeteries commensurate with standards of appearance of the finest cemeteries in the world; the number of additional national cemeteries required to meet future burial needs of veterans until 2020; the advantages and disadvantages of using flat grave markers and upright headstones in national cemeteries; and the condition of flat grave marker sections in national cemeteries. Logistics Management Institute (LMI) was selected as the independent contractor for this study.

The results of the study required by section 613 are being issued in three separate volumes:

- Volume 1: Future Burial Needs
- Volume 2: National Shrine Commitment – Facility Condition Assessment
- Volume 3: Cemetery Standards of Appearance

I have enclosed a copy of the cost statement of preparing the section 613 study as required by the Veterans Benefits and Health Care improvement Act of 2000.

The Honorable Christopher H. Smith

The Future Burial Needs report provides an assessment of the number of additional cemeteries that will be required to ensure that 90 percent of veterans live within 75 miles of a national cemetery beginning in 2005 and projecting out to 2020. In addition, the report identifies those areas in the United States with the greatest concentration of veterans whose burial needs are not served by a national cemetery as well as an estimate of the costs to construct, staff and equip a new cemetery.

The report adheres to parameters required by Congress to use 90 percent as the study objective for veterans served. The analysis is also presented in 5-year milestones beginning in 2005 and ending in 2020 as required.

LMI's analysis is based on the assumptions that:

- Six new national cemeteries currently planned and six new state cemeteries where grants have been awarded will be completed;
- New cemeteries should be located close to major population areas and/or major transportation arteries; and
- VA would take no action to expand burial capacity or extend the service capability of existing national cemeteries.

LMI's analysis projects the need for the construction of 31 new cemeteries across the country between 2005 and 2020 in order to first achieve and then maintain, the 90 percent study objective.

Although LMI assumed that VA would take no action to expand burial capacity or extend the service capability of existing national cemeteries, NCA has and will endeavor to continue to maintain the service capability of existing cemeteries either through the acquisition of additional land or construction of columbaria to optimize available land. NCA also works closely with states to encourage and facilitate the establishment of state veterans cemeteries as a complement to our national cemeteries. Because we plan to extend the life of a number of the cemeteries which LMI assumed will close and because we expect the states will expand service, nine locations identified in LMI's report will not require new cemeteries.

The Future Burial Needs report will serve as a valuable planning tool for decisions regarding new cemeteries. In view of the challenges raised by the prospect of building a large number of new cemeteries, we have considered the report's findings in the context of current policy.

The Honorable Christopher H. Smith

- VA will continue to maintain a 75-mile radius as an appropriate service area standard. Substantial documentation exists to demonstrate that 80 percent of burials in national cemeteries come from within 75 miles of the cemetery. VA acknowledges that there are a number of factors that could impact travel to a national cemetery. Some of these are geographic and some reflect the challenges found in densely populated metropolitan areas. For this reason, location and accessibility within an identified 75-mile service area are carefully considered when locating new cemeteries in order to maximize access for veterans and their families.
- VA will establish a veteran population threshold of 170,000 within a 75 mile service radius as appropriate for the establishment of a new national cemetery. This is consistent with decisions relating to the location of each of the five recently opened national cemeteries. The veteran population in the service area of each of these cemeteries is at least 170,000.
- VA did not establish a veteran population threshold for the establishment of state veterans cemeteries. VA will continue to encourage states through the State Cemetery Grants Program to expand service capacity of open state veterans cemeteries, establish cemeteries to replace national cemeteries that are depleting their inventory of first interment gravesites, and to establish new state cemeteries in unserved areas. This may require that future grant applications be prioritized in order to serve the greatest number of veterans.

Enclosed is a list of the 31 locations recommended by LMI as areas of greatest need. Locations are ranked in order of veteran population in 2005 based on VA VetPop2000 data. The list identifies all locations in italics that will not need a new cemetery based on actions VA plans to take to acquire adjacent land at existing national cemeteries or to award grants for new state cemeteries.

Based on a threshold and the locations recommended in the enclosure, VA would plan for three additional national cemeteries between 2002 and 2020. It includes one (Sarasota County, FL) to ensure continued service delivery when an existing cemetery is projected to close due to the lack of any additional land for acquisition. The remaining two cemeteries (Birmingham, AL and Greenville/Columbia, SC) will provide a burial option in areas not currently served by any national or state veterans cemetery within 75 miles. In addition, three areas identified above the threshold will not need a new national cemetery based on opportunities to acquire adjacent land at Willamette National Cemetery

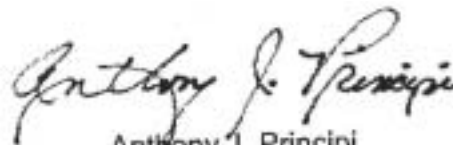
Page 4.

The Honorable Christopher H. Smith

(Salem, OR), Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery (St. Louis, MO) and Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery (San Antonio, TX).

Additional copies of this report are available from Mr. Charles Likel, Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, at 202-273-5615.

Sincerely yours,



Anthony J. Principi

Enclosures (3)

Recommended Locations for New Cemeteries	Population Gained (2005 veteran population. Source: VA VetPop 2000)	Year Needed	Anticipated Actions/ Comments
Sarasota County, FL	373,583	2020	Served by Bay Pines until 2020
(Salem, OR)	267,804	2015	Land Acquisition, Willamette NC
Birmingham, AL	228,714	2005	
(St. Louis, MO)	228,154	2010	Land Acquisition, Jefferson Barracks NC
(San Antonio, TX)	193,226	2015	Land Acquisition Ft. Sam Houston NC
Greenville/Columbia, SC	174,458	2005	
(Chesapeake, VA)	167,130	2010	State Cemetery, Suffolk, VA
(Sumter, FL)	163,640	2020	Land Acquisition Florida NC
Bakersfield, CA	160,456	2005	
Jacksonville, FL	159,180	2005	
Charleston, WV	153,467	2005	
Philadelphia/Trenton, PA	151,909	2010	Served by Beverly NC until 2010
Buffalo, NY	130,271	2005	
Beaufort, SC	122,194	2015	Served by Beaufort NC until 2015
Longview, TX	117,478	2005	
Omaha, NE	115,002	2005	
Biloxi, MS	110,577	2015	Served by Biloxi NC until 2015
(Crestview, FL)	104,301	2010	Land Acquisition, Barrancas NC
Albuquerque, NM ¹	100,145	2015	Served by Santa Fe NC until 2012
Roscommon, MI	100,102	2005	
(Tucson, AZ)	98,828	2005	State Cemetery, Ft. Huachuca, AZ
Middletown, NY	96,481	2005	
Melbourne, FL	96,184	2005	
Waco/Austin, TX	93,302	2005	
(Davenport, IA)	84,008	2015	Land Acquisition, Rock Island NC
Des Moines, IA	81,919	2005	
Roanoke, VA	81,607	2015	
Tallahassee, FL	80,354	2005	
Spokane, WA	73,973	2005	
(Winfield, KS)	70,480	2005	State Cemetery, Winfield, KS
Evansville, IN	68,154	2005	

¹ In compliance with the Conference Report (107-272) accompanying the FY 2002 appropriations bill, VA will begin initial cemetery planning activities to meet the future burial needs of veterans in the Albuquerque area within the context of national priorities.

**Estimate of Cost to Prepare
Congressionally Mandated Report**

Title of Report: Vol.1: Future Burial Needs

An Independent Study of Improvements to
Veterans' Cemeteries

Report Required by: Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits
Act of 1999 (Pub.L. 106-117, § 613 113 Stat.
1545, 1581 (1999))

In accordance with section 116 of Title 38, United States Code, listed below is a statement of the cost of preparing Volume 1: Future Burial Needs and a brief explanation of the methodology used in preparing the cost estimate.

Contract Cost	\$2,494,155.00
Staff Cost	\$ 116,510.00
Total Cost	\$2,610,665.00

Contract cost reflects the firm fixed price contract with Logistics Management Institute for the entire section 613 study and includes printing and distribution.

Staff cost is based on 1,910 staff hours at approximately \$61.00 per hour (salary and benefits).